Government is absolutely determined to ensure through appropriate use of tariff mechanism that imports do not cause any detriment or injury to domestic farmers. Towards that end, Government has increased duties on a number of agricultural items where a surge in imports was noticed or apprehended. For example, the duty on arecanut has been raised to 100%, on poultry products to 100%, on wheat to 50%, on skimmed milk powder to 60%, on apple to 50%, on rice to 80%, on coconut to 35% and on coconut oil to 45%. India's tariff bindings at W.T.O, for most of the agricultural items are fairly high and effective rates of customs duties can be raised to those levels, in case there is any evidence of substantial increase in imports.

Government is aware of the emerging scenario for the SSI Units and cottage industries and has taken several steps to help them become globally competitive. These include special focus on areas such as technology up-gradation, infrastructure assistance through the cluster approach, timely availability of credit, adoption of modern management practices, use of electronic infrastructure, marketing and timely information dissemination, including sensitization of small industries to the emerging challenges of trade liberalization. Besides, a Group of Ministers has been entrusted with the task of suggesting ways and means of strengthening the SSI sector. Government has also constituted an Inter-Ministerial Group to study the impact of removal of quantitative restrictions.

India has been following a continuous policy of removing import restrictions since 1991, as part of economic liberalization programme and also in accordance with multilateral trading arrangements and not under any pressures.

Compromise on QR on Import

*395. SHRI MANOJ BHATTACHARYA:
SHRI N.K. PREMACHANDRAN:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) how many and exactly what are the agricultural items which are included in 714 items where the Quantitative Restriction (QR) for import has been compromised; and

(b) the details of all 1429 (714+715) items on which the QR will be totally compromised to facilitate unhindered market exploitation by the foreign countries?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) and (b) Import restrictions on 230 agricultural items (as classified under chapter 1 of 24 of ITC(HS) Classifications of Export and Import Items, 1997-2000) at 8 digit level were removed on 31.03.2000. Copy of Notification regarding removal of restrictions, as effected on 31.03.2000, is available in the Parliament Library. Similarly list containing details of 1429 items is also available in the Parliament Library.

India has been following a consistent policy for gradual removal of restrictions on imports since 1991. Tariff line-wise import policy was first announced on 31.3.1996. As on that date, import of 6161 tariff lines (at 10 digit level) out of the total number of 10202 was free. Import restrictions on 488 tariff lines were removed during the period 1.4.96 to 31.3.97. Further 391 tariff lines (at 8 digit level) were freed during the period 1.4.97 to 13.4.98 and 894 tariff lines (at 8 digit level) were freed on 1.4.99. Thus removal of import restrictions on 714 tariff lines as carried out on 31.3.2000 was nothing but the continuation of the stated policy of the Government over the years.

However, Government is absolutely determined to ensure through appropriate use of the tariff and other mechanisms that imports do not cause any serious detriment or injury to the domestic industry due to import restrictions removal by April, 2001. Towards that end, Government has increased duties on a numbers of items where a surge in imports was noticed or apprehended, for example, the duty on arecanut has been raised to 100%, on poultry products to 100%, on wheat to 50%, on skimmed milk powder to 60%, on apple to 50%, on rice to 80%, on coconut to 35% and on coconut oil to 45%. Government has also constituted an Inter-Ministerial Group to study the impact of removal of quantitative restrictions.

Export of Minerals

†*396. SHRI MOOLCHAND MEENA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) the quantity of minerals exported from the country during the last three years; year-wise and State-wise;

(b) the names of the countries where these minerals were exported; and

(c) the foreign currency earned from this export?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) to (c) The collection of export and import data is done at national

† Original notice of the Question was received in Hindi.